

Both traditional infrastructure, like roads and bridges, and social infrastructure—we mean by that things that help people and families directly, such as healthcare, family leave, and education—will receive the kind of support that the American people so need and are asking for. We are very proud of this plan.

Now, we know, the road ahead is going to be long. There are bumps along the way. This is only the first step in a long road we will have to travel and must travel, but we are going to get this done because we so fervently believe that we must make average American lives a whole lot better.

We want middle-class people to be able to stay in the middle class and breathe easier in the middle class. We want poor people to be able to climb that ladder to get to the middle class. And nothing, nothing that has been put on the floor of this Senate will do that better than this bill. Nothing that has been put on the floor of the Senate for the last several decades will do that the way this bill will. It is transformational. And, frankly, it is exciting.

The eventual legislation we are talking about is best understood in three buckets: jobs, families, climate. Instead of giving a giant tax break to large corporations and the wealthy, as our Republican colleagues did when they were in the majority, we are going to strengthen the backbone of the middle class by making critical investments in infrastructure, creating thousands upon thousands upon thousands of good-paying jobs in the process with apprenticeships and training so that people who never had opportunities to have these jobs can get them and then lead good lives for decades later.

The resolution will make sure that there are no tax increases for families under \$400,000 and no tax increases for small businesses. This is about rebuilding the middle class and creating jobs. And we will change our tax policy far different than what our Republican friends did. The very wealthy, the people at the top who escaped paying all or a lot of taxes—no, no, no—they are going to pay their fair share for the first time in a long time, so different than what our Republican colleagues did. Their bill gave the top 1 percent a huge percentage, some estimated as high as 83 percent of the breaks. We are going to give it to the middle class, to the working people.

For American families, we will introduce paid family leave, as well as one important addition to President Biden's proposal, which is a robust expansion of Medicare to cover dental, vision, and hearing. This is something that Chairman SANDERS, Budget Chairman SANDERS, has championed and alerted not just this Chamber but the Nation to its need. We are going to get it done.

And on climate, we must act on climate. We have seen what is going on

just in the last month. We are going to invest in green infrastructure—strong, bold, green infrastructure; electric vehicles; clean and renewable power; resilient projects, housing, and more that will not only help our country adapt to a changing climate but slow climate change itself.

On top of President Biden's plans, Democrats will add other policies to significantly deal with climate, such as reducing methane emissions, one of the most potent and deadly of the greenhouse gases.

So jobs, families, climate, these are the three buckets that Democrats will be working on.

Again, let me repeat. There is a long road ahead of us. But the fact that we were able to come together last night with the diverse views on the Budget Committee was a strong shot out of the gate.

Now, I am sure my friends on the other side of the aisle are going to pan this and say one thing or another. We can predict they will label anything where we reach out to help American families. They don't want to do that. They just want to help those wealthy people. They don't want their taxes to rise. They don't want the government to help the people, so they are going to criticize it and use their usual name-calling. That is what they have been doing for years, no matter what legislation there is. I am quite sure they will raise phony concerns about the debt and deficit.

Hello, my colleagues, you raised the deficit by \$2 trillion so you can give tax cuts; namely, to wealthy people and big corporations. And now you are going to claim, when we want to help middle-class families, poor families, that there is a deficit? Give us and give the American people a break. It is hypocrisy.

The American people won't buy their criticisms. Creating jobs; providing family leave; making education, housing, and healthcare more affordable; fighting climate change, no one seriously believes that these policies are the policies on the road to what they might call socialism. These are what American people want. Paid family leave, helping people go to college, come on, that is part of our democratic tradition where we build ladders up. And I mean small "d," American tradition, where we build ladders up to help people climb up and live a good life.

So the goals we must pursue are goals to build back our middle class, secure our middle class, help more people get to the middle class, to bolster our economy, to lay the foundation for another century of American prosperity, just as Franklin Roosevelt did close to 100 years ago. And that is exactly what the Democratic majority is going to do.

#### MARIJUANA

Mr. President, now on another subject, later today, on marijuana, I will join my colleagues Senators Booker and Wyden to release draft legislation

to reform the Federal marijuana laws, principally to end the prohibition on marijuana at the Federal level for the first time in several generations.

Over the past decades, Americans' attitudes toward marijuana have undergone a dramatic transformation. Listen to this: Nearly 70 percent of Americans support legalizing adult use of marijuana—70. Eighteen States, plus DC, have passed laws on adult use of marijuana. Thirty-seven States and DC have legalized marijuana for medical use.

The States are supposed to be our laboratory for democracy, and by all accounts, these experiments have been a success. The doom-and-gloom predictions of the naysayers—oh, crime will go way up, drug use will go all the way up—have never, never materialized. I note that a State like South Dakota had it on its ballot in the last election. In that conservative State, the majority people voted in the same direction that we are talking about here.

For decades, for decades, young men and young women, disproportionately young Black and Hispanic men and women have been arrested and jailed for even carrying a small amount of marijuana in their pocket, a charge that often came with exorbitant penalties and a serious criminal record because of the overcriminalization of marijuana, and it followed them for the remainder of their lives. It makes no sense, and it is time for change.

Now is the time for Congress to engage in this debate, update our Federal laws to not only reflect popular wisdom but science. Marijuana, amazingly in this 21st century, is still treated by Federal law with the same hostility as heroin, despite it being far, far less dangerous.

So I greatly look forward to releasing this draft legislation with my colleagues Senators Wyden and Booker today. We will speak about how our bill will address the issues relating to updating our Federal marijuana laws, not just ending the Federal prohibition, but how it will ensure restorative justice, protect public health, and implement responsible taxes and regulations.

#### NOMINATION OF MYRNA PEREZ

Mr. President, on a final matter, Myrna Perez. In a moment, I am excited to head over to the Judiciary Committee to introduce an outstanding nominee for one of the most important courts in the country, the Second Circuit Court of Appeals in New York. And the person I will introduce is Myrna Perez, one of the foremost election lawyers in the country.

The daughter of Mexican immigrants, Myrna graduated from Yale, Harvard, and Columbia Law School before joining the Brennan Center for Justice as a voting rights and election litigator. The Federal bench has long been occupied by former prosecutors and corporate lawyers. It is about time that civil rights attorneys, Federal defenders, and voting rights experts, like

Myrna Perez, one of the foremost voting experts in the country, join the ranks.

Especially now, when our democracy is in peril in many ways, it is crucial we elevate someone like Ms. Perez to the bench, someone we can trust to faithfully and equally apply the law of our great democracy.

I was proud to recommend her to President Biden, and I look forward to formally introducing her to the committee today. When I met her, as I did to interview candidates, she knocked my socks off with her brilliance, her persistence, and her strong and wonderful personality.

I yield the floor.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

#### VOTING LAWS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, at any particular moment, with total certainty, Washington Democrats know one of two things to be true, either American democracy is so well-functioning, so sacrosanct that nobody can possibly question or badmouth it; or democracy is in total crisis, hanging on by a thread, and only a massive, sweeping partisan overhaul by Democrats can save it.

Now, it can be hard to guess which of those opposite stories Democrats will be shouting on any given day. The narrative flip-flops at a dizzying pace.

After 2016, when voters picked Republicans, Secretary Clinton and a whole cast of senior Democrats called the new President illegitimate. Two-thirds of all Democrats said Russia had probably or definitely hacked into our voting systems and actually changed the tallies, a baseless conspiracy theory, a big lie.

Four years later, they kept insisting that democracy was broken and Democrats had to overhaul it. H.R. 1 was written and introduced on that pretense.

As recently as last summer, when the 2020 election was looking close, Democrats and cable news spent multiple weeks in literal hysterics over what they said was a massive secret election conspiracy revolving around the Postal Service—another big lie.

It was one frantic meltdown after another, constant, silly claims that our democracy would die. But last November, their story turned on a dime because Democrats got election results they liked a lot better.

Now, suddenly, our elections were no longer in crisis. Now American democracy was finely tuned, fully legitimate, and beyond reproach. For about 11 weeks, from President Biden's election through his inauguration, Democrats and their immediate friends briefly stopped being our democracy's biggest doubters and became its No. 1 fans. But now, as Democrats look ahead to the first midterm that is almost always challenging for the sitting President's party, the silly hysterics have been switched right back on.

This spring, the State of Georgia passed a mainstream election law that expanded early voting and made drop boxes permanent for the first time. The left responded with a total meltdown. Regulations that left Georgia with more flexible early voting and more flexible absentee voting than many blue States, including New York, were, insanely, called "Jim Crow 2.0." What nonsense.

Georgia Democrats scared huge corporations into promoting a moral panic that was completely and totally false. It was a shameless effort to manufacture an air of crisis to help Democrats ram their election takeover bills through the Congress, but it didn't work. The Senate rejected all the bad ideas in S. 1, so the made-up outrage had to be cranked up even higher—even higher.

So this week, State legislators from Texas decided to grab some beer, hop on a private plane, and flee the State in what they are pretending is some great moral crusade. In reality, they have just come here to Washington to snap selfies, bask in the limelight, and beg Senate Democrats to take over Texas elections.

Once again, this outrage is completely phony. The Texas Legislature was going to consider bills that would expand the minimum hours of early voting, make even more counties provide 12-hour days of early voting, and make it even easier for voters to fix mistakes on mail-in ballots so their votes would actually count. These bills would apply voter ID to mail-in ballots through a simple process that doesn't even require a driver's license number. They would clean up voter rolls to remove voters who have died or moved away.

This is not controversial stuff; it is common sense. More than 80 percent of Texans support voter ID. But Democrats have pulled out the same Chicken Little playbook that failed in Georgia, the same big lies.

Yesterday, the President of the United States delivered a speech that was set in an alternate universe. He called these mainstream State laws, these modest integrity measures that are wildly popular with Americans—now, listen to this—"the most significant test of our democracy since the Civil War." Really? This is our new President, who promised to lower the temperature, bring America back together, and rebuild a civil society where we can dialogue as fellow citizens? That is the person who is now yelling that mainstream State laws are more dangerous than two world wars, more dangerous than poll tests and Bull Connor and actual Jim Crow segregation and somehow analogous to the Civil War? That is what the President of the United States said yesterday? What utter nonsense. It would be laugh-out-loud funny if it wasn't so completely and totally irresponsible.

Here are the great sins of the Texas proposals. Here is what is apparently

so outrageous: They want to wind down a few emergency COVID voting procedures, including drive-through voting and polling places that are open all night long. I am serious. That is what this is all about, that they want to wind down two COVID voting procedures: drive-through voting and polling places that are open 24/7.

Because of the pandemic, for the first time ever, some places in Texas experimented with these brandnew, unusual measures, but now winding them down is somehow an assault on democracy? Really? If Texas is not interested in permanently letting people vote from their car windows or at 3 in the morning, then President Biden says that "they want to make it so hard and inconvenient they hope people don't vote at all," simply because you can't vote all night? Really? These brandnew exceptions for a 100-year pandemic are supposed to now be sacred pillars of our system. Things that we did last year to deal with a 100-year pandemic—to get rid of any of that is a threat to our system?

Voter ID protections are supported by majorities of White Americans, Black Americans, and Hispanic Americans, but President Biden calls these things "a 21st-century Jim Crow assault"—one big lie after another. These people think that if they just keep repeating the same melodramatic clichés, they will finally get to pull off the power grab.

These false comparisons are an insult to the actual hurdles that Americans have overcome over the years together. We have won two world wars, faced down the Soviets, unwound brutal segregation, defeated actual Jim Crow laws, and endured the 9/11 attacks, but now the sky is falling? The sky is falling because of these mainstream laws that people actually support? Because Texans want to allow 16-hour days of voting but just not in the dead of night?

Do they know that nobody outside of liberal Twitter and cable television is buying an ounce of what they are selling? The big lies, the fake outrage failed in Georgia. The big lies and fake outrage failed here in the Senate, and they will fail in Texas.

The big lies and fake outrage are totally failing to persuade the American people. Americans want to make it easy to vote but hard to cheat. Americans know that having widespread and accessible voting, along with voter ID, isn't an attack on democracy; it is the definition of democracy.

So, look, I understand the Democrats may be growing nervous about the 2022 elections. I can see why. Liberal policies are overspending, overborrowing, and hurting our economy. They are destabilizing the Middle East, weakening our southern border, and increasing violent crime across our country. But the solution is not to keep lying to the American people about the health of our democracy. The answer is not this desperate craving for an unprecedented